

## **Iowa Alternate Assessment Clarifications and Revisions School Year 2005-2006**

In order to fully meet the requirements for implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEA), two major revisions have been made to the Iowa Alternate Assessment Process (IAA):

- **Reading and Math must be assessed at grades 3-8 and 11**
- **Science must be assessed at grades 5, 8, and 11 (this will be a pilot year for this content area but still must be included as part of the assessment at these 3 grade levels)**

Students in these grades who meet the Iowa Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines must submit assessment portfolios for these content areas.

Additionally, there will be a much greater emphasis on assessment alignment within these content areas. While this has always been assumed to be the case, clearer, more explicit alignment will be looked for in scoring the Achievement of Benchmarks Dimension. Towards fulfillment of NCLB and IDEA, the Core Content Standards and Benchmarks Corresponding to the Iowa Tests must be the starting point for educational teams when deciding upon targets for assessment for students participating in the IAA. Alignment will be viewed in this manner:

- The CCSB must be selected for assessment.
- The corresponding (aligned to the CCSB) district Standard and grade level Benchmark must be identified.
- The target skill (specific measurable behavior) that demonstrates learning of the grade level content standard/benchmark) for an individual student must be aligned to the grade level benchmark. In other words, the target skill must directly assess the same construct as is stated in the district grade level benchmark which is aligned to the district standard which is aligned to the CCSB.

It may be helpful for educational teams to think about this definition of alignment from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *Lexicon of Learning* (retrieved from the web [[www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)] August, 2005) which states that alignment is:

*“The effort to ensure that what teachers teach is in accord with what the curriculum says will be taught and what is assessed on official tests. If students are not taught the intended content—because of inadequate learning materials, inadequate teacher preparation, or other reasons—or if official tests assess knowledge and skills different from those taught, test scores will obviously be lower than they otherwise would be.”*

In an attempt to reduce educational team burden caused by these new requirements, The Iowa Department of Education has relaxed the evidence requirements for the IAA for the

2005-2006 school year. For this year, **only the evidence of the Achievement of Benchmarks dimension is required for submission and this is the only score that will be reported to the US Dept. of Ed.** However, evidence of the other 3 dimensions may be submitted (and some AEAs may insist this be the case). If other assessment evidence is submitted, it will be scored and reported back to the AEA only to be used for instructional improvement purposes. Evidence of the other 3 dimensions will be added back into the submission and scoring requirements in the year 2006-2007. This is true for the science pilot as well as reading and math.

Very few revisions have been made to the IAA Educator's Guide but clarifications have been made re: issues that seem to have been confusing (based upon assessment data and actual assessment evidence) in the past year. These serve, not only to enhance Iowa's compliance with the provisions of NCLB but assist educational teams in the IAA combined processes of assessment and instruction of students with significant cognitive disabilities. A summary of these refinements is as follows:

- **Overall:** references to federal legislation have been updated to reflect NCLB and the reauthorized IDEA
- **Section A. Participation Guidelines:** information re: the submission of the science content area has been added; added discussion clarifications re: Participation Guidelines
- **Section B. Merging Assessment and Instruction:** added references to *5 Phases of the IEP*; included information of the alignment of the CCSBs, district standards and benchmarks, and target skills; added information to access skills; included information re: necessity and process of addressing both functional and academic skills
- **Section C. Standards and the IEP:** identified several places in the process in which refer to the *5 Phases of the IEP* document and added guidance for IEP teams in developing standards based IEP objectives; added section on CCSBs and alignment
- **Section D. Rubric:** removed "extended benchmark" from the calibrated rubric; changed performance level descriptors to match general assessment labels; added definition of unit of study; added example of reduced complexity (Priti); added clarification on allowable settings
- **Section E. Alternate Assessment Model:** added more information (including samples) re: tasks; updated examples of review, observe, task; added examples of science
- **Section F. Procedures:** added science content area and CCSBs into procedures
- **Appendices:** updated forms; added CCSBs; added sample tasks; added updated Iowa document *A Family Guide to the Alternate Assessment in Iowa*; added Parent Permission for Use form